



Zebulon B. Vance
Birthplace
State Historic Site

WEAVERVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Administered by the

HISTORIC SITES DIVISION
STATE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

Raleigh, North Carolina



Zebulon B. Vance Birthplace

He was the Mount Mitchell of all our great men, and in the affections and love of the people, he towered above them all. As ages to come will not be able to mar the grandeur and greatness of Mount Mitchell, so they will not be able to efface from the hearts and minds of the people the name of their beloved Vance.

Thus did one of North Carolina's Governors, Thomas J. Jarvis, describe another: Zebulon Baird Vance, born May 13, 1830, in a pine log house near Asheville, North Carolina.

North Carolina has had a long line of governors—dating from 1585, when Ralph Lane landed on the coast of what is now this State, after an exploratory voyage dispatched from England by Sir Walter Raleigh. But perhaps no other governor ever won the hearts of his fellow Tar Heels like the mountain lawyer who was sworn into office on September 8, 1862, during the trying times of the Civil War.

Before that time, Vance had served as a member of the North Carolina House of Commons, a United States congressman for two terms, and a Confederate colonel in command of the 26th North Carolina Infantry Regiment. After that date, Vance was three times Governor of his State and four times a United States senator.

Vance's Background

The third of eight children of David and Mira Baird Vance, Zeb Vance was born in a house built in the 1790's by his grandfather, Colonel David Vance, an officer in the American Revolution.

David Vance was a captain at Kings Mountain, saw action at Germantown, Brandywine, and Monmouth, and was with Washington's men at Valley Forge. He was later appointed a colonel of State militia. After the war, he helped survey the boundary line between North Carolina and Tennessee, served in the State Legislature, and became the first clerk of the court in Buncombe County.

Dr. Robert Brank Vance, an uncle of Zeb Vance, was a pioneer

mountain physician and a United States congressman from 1824 to 1826. His career came to a tragic end in 1827 when he was killed in a duel with Samuel P. Carson at Saluda Gap, on the North Carolina-South Carolina boundary. Carson was trained in marksmanship for the duel by a Tennessee frontiersman, David Crockett.

Zeb Vance's father, David, served his country as a captain in the War of 1812. After the war, he continued to live at the Vance home

place although some of his brothers and sisters moved to Tennessee to occupy land willed to them by their father, Colonel Vance, at his death in 1813.

David Vance was married to Mira Margaret Baird at the home of her father, Zebulon Baird, on a farm near Asheville. Their first child was born in 1826; the eighth in 1842.

When young Zeb was 6, he was sent to boarding school at Flat Creek and later attended school at



THE SITTING ROOM

Lapland (Marshall) when the family moved there. At the age of 12, Vance entered Washington College near Jonesboro, Tennessee (actually a high school) and remained there until called home in 1844 by the illness and subsequent death of his father.

Young Vance received further schooling in the Asheville area and then was enrolled in the University of North Carolina for one year (1851-1852) to study law. A \$300 loan from the University enabled him to enroll. He was admitted to the bar in 1852 at the age of 21 and was elected county solicitor the same year. In 1853 he was married to Harriette Newell Espy of Salisbury at "Quaker Meadows," the home of Colonel Charles McDowell in Burke County.

Zebulon Baird Vance:
Public Servant

Vance was elected to the North Carolina House of Commons in 1854, at the age of 24, but was defeated in his subsequent race for the State Senate. He was elected to the 35th and 36th United States congresses and also to the 37th, but did not serve the last term because of the secession of North Carolina from the Union in 1861.

Vance was a Union man prior to the outbreak of the Civil War, but he became a fervent Confederate when North Carolina joined the ranks of her sister States of the South. Shortly after the firing on Fort Sumter, Vance raised a company of mountain men, "The Rough and Ready Guards," and



COLONELS OF THE 26TH REGIMENT:
LANE, BURGWIN, AND VANCE.

marched off to war in Virginia. He was later elected colonel of his regiment according to the custom of the day whereby officers were elected by the men serving under them instead of being commissioned by the central government.

In 1862, while in the field with his men near New Bern, Vance was elected Governor of North Carolina. He took no part in the campaign but continued his military duties. In fact, he led his regiment into battle just before the election took place.

Vance's two terms in office were marked by his purchase of fast ships to run the Union naval blockade with critical supplies for civilian and military use, and by his defense of the civil rights of North Carolinians, particularly after the passage of the unpopular Confed-



ORIGINAL VANCE BIRTHPLACE AS IT APPEARED IN 1895

erate conscription act. During the Civil War, North Carolina contributed more troops to the Confederacy than any other State and also sustained heavier losses in men killed and wounded. North Carolina was the only State in the South which clothed and equipped its own troops, under Vance's policy of looking after the State's own men.

Vance's second term in the Governor's office came to an abrupt

end in May, 1865, when General Joseph E. Johnston surrendered his weary, gray-clad forces to General William T. Sherman at the Bennett Place near the present city of Durham. Union cavalymen arrested Vance at Statesville, May 13, and took him to prison in Washington, D. C., along with several other Confederate governors. He remained in confinement for seven weeks.

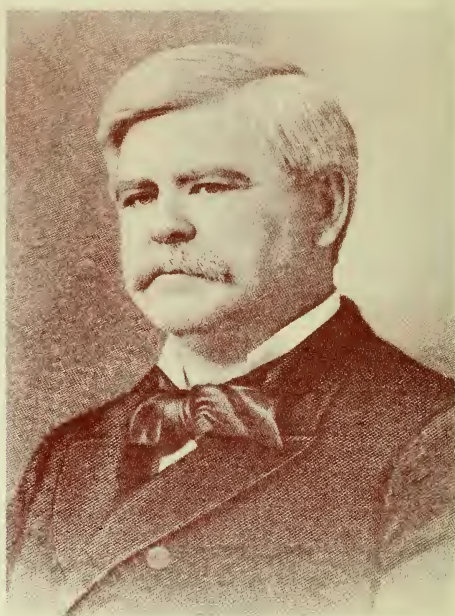
After the war, Vance practiced law in Charlotte for ten years before returning to public life upon his election in 1876 to a third term as governor. After serving only two years, he was elected to the United States Senate and served there until his death on April 14, 1894.

The first Mrs. Vance, the mother of Governor Vance's four sons, died in 1878. Two years later he married Mrs. Florence Steele Martin of Kentucky, who survived him by many years.

This historic old homestead, restored to perpetuate the name of Zebulon Baird Vance, was also the birthplace of Robert Brank Vance, Zeb Vance's brother, who became a brigadier general for the Confederacy during the Civil War. General Vance was captured by the Federals in the latter part of the war and spent more than a year in Union prisons. After the war he served twelve years in the United States Congress and was Assistant Commissioner of Patents in Washington during the first administration of President Grover Cleveland.

The Restoration Project

Efforts to restore the Vance Birthplace were made intermittently for nearly half a century. At different times two separate State commissions were appointed for this purpose but not until 1955 was the way cleared for definite action when the North Carolina Department of Archives and History assumed responsibility for the project. Under the direction of the



VANCE AS U. S. SENATOR

Historic Sites Division of the Department, the restoration has been carried out in close co-operation with the Western North Carolina Historical Association and other local agencies and organizations. The City of Asheville and the Board of Commissioners of Buncombe County each allocated \$8,000 toward the total cost and approximately \$3,500 was contributed privately. The remainder of the necessary funds was made available through State appropriations. The project is administered by the Department of Archives and History from biennial appropriations of the General Assembly.

The site was purchased in 1957. The next year, work was begun to prepare for the restoration. As the first step it was necessary to dismantle a frame house which had been erected on the original foun-

dation about 1895. This house was built around the original large chimney and fireplaces and incorporated much of the timbering and interior woodwork of the original structure. The chimney and the salvaged wood materials were preserved and are a part of the reconstruction. The logs and shingles of the restored house were new but were processed in the ancient manner. The interior woodwork is all old material taken either from the original Vance house or from other old buildings in the mountains. The furnishings are early nineteenth century or earlier, including a few items from the Vance family.

The dwelling house was a large two-story house fairly typical in plan of the larger plantation houses of the period in central and western North Carolina. It was built of logs but was in no sense a shanty cabin.

In addition to the dwelling house the restoration includes a number of outbuildings already or soon to be reconstructed. A slave cabin, a smokehouse, and spring house are already built. Shortly to be constructed is a museum-visitor center which will serve as the administration and reception center for the project and will house exhibits illustrating Vance's public career



THE KITCHEN

as lawyer, governor, and United States senator. These exhibits will complement the restored birthplace, showing how a rural mountain boy developed into a beloved public figure.

Vance Birthplace is open to the public from Tuesday through Sat-

urday during regular working hours and on Sunday afternoons. It is closed on Monday. A small admission price is charged—25¢ for adults and 10¢ for children.

The map shows how to reach the site from the Asheville area and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Address Correspondence to:

Historic Site Specialist
Zebulon B. Vance Birthplace State Historic Site
Weaverville, North Carolina

